

WCO outreachCEM Resource

From: Gerson T. Lessser, MD [gtl1@nyu.edu]
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2012 6:53 PM
To: WCO outreach Resource
Subject: Comment on nuclear waste proposals

Gentlemen:

One is amazed at the lack of new proposals in your recent report and of the frightening outcomes of even "bad case" scenarios (which would be reasonably common in contrast to "worst-case" scenarios). As examples:

1. The suggestions for storage of nuclear waste seem little different from those presently in operation at so many nuclear plants around the country. Any of these, all of them potentially very dangerous to people and to the environment, will remain subject to disruption by terrorist action (or war), or by any number of natural disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes (e.g. Fukushima), or by several mechanical failures or human failures taking place concurrently. As each of these sites contains modestly high to huge amounts of very dangerous radioactivity, the potential impact on the environment and on human life is really beyond imagination;

2. The considerations of a permanent site which would be safe for hundreds of years or perhaps millennia is of course an ideal goal. Yet despite a great deal of human effort and billions of dollars and some legislation, this goal has remained elusive for the nearly 70 years since man created nuclear waste.

So we have not really arrived at any reasonable solution, and there probably will be none in the foreseeable future. This suggests that our most important action would be to rapidly diminish and soon to stop adding radioactive material to the present large pool. This means giving up any thoughts of new nuclear plants, and closing the older plants within the next very few years -- these plans are being adopted by Germany, and are being considered by a number of other countries. Countries that have shut most all of their plants in the past year seem to have experienced no severe electrical shortages. Certainly our society can learn to efficiently, and at reasonable cost, substitute solar and wind power for nuclear and, soon for fossil production of power. And should such change be instituted at somewhat higher cost to society, isn't that worth it to keep our planet available for human occupation?

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